WENDY CLARKE

For the past two years I have been working in ½inch video tape. I was given a portapack as a present and began by keeping a video journal for 9 months - everyday - several times a day. At that time I was studying a lot of theatre. Along with daily self-confrontations I tried to work with theatre exercises and live video. I started to incorporate all my past dance, painting, writing and theatrical experiences with video while taping with my friends and family. Out of this grew my first workshop which was teaching a group of theatre students at Sarah Lawrence. In the spring of 1973 I gave workshops at the "Women in Film Festival" in Toronto, Canada. The following summer I gave an intensive workshop for the dance department of the University of Colorado. That fall I was artist in residence at the Boston Museum School where I gave video workshops and performed for the school with the workshop members. I have been teaching an advanced video workshop at the Women's Interart Center since February 1974, and conceived and directed "What's On Tonight?" - A Video Sculpture Performance.

My approach to video is as a discovery of a new way of seeing -- a video way. I have been working mainly on process and methods of discovery. I use theatre games, design, poetry, in short, all kinds of art medi in creating video art. The workshops and the work are all based on personal material. I am interested in how these different media affect video and how, when combined, a new concept of video is discovered.

"What's on Tonight?-A Video Sculpture Performance" directed by Wendy Clarke consists of a maze that leads one through different rooms each of which demonstrates the many video discoveries that were made. Shapes of monitors are changed, moved or disguised in different environments. Live video, documentary tapes and conceptual tapes were designed for each individual piece.

During the course of the evening open workshops are held, involving the audience, demonstrating how the workshop participants arrived at some of the pieces. These open workshops have the possibility of enabling the audience to create new pieces. The productions next year will be designed to do so. In the present production, many of the pieces need active audience participation to make them complete. For instance, the teleidescope piece is a feedback tape which an audience member looks into and changes the image by turning the lens. He or she also controls the color by turning knobs and buttons on an attached colorizer. This piece is always in the process of change as each participant controls the dials and the lens.

We are now requesting funds to create and mount two video environment productions for next year. The first is scheduled to open during the Christmas season. The workshop group will use the Christmas theme, exploring culturally fixed holiday traditions through a medium (video) too young to have established traditions. A group of artists of varying discipline will work on this production. It will serve as an exploratory workshop for them. The second production, planned for the spring, will have as its theme video and the intermix of other art forms. For example, a dancer may choreograph a piece with a monitor as part of the body, or moving monitors functioning as dancers, thereby enlarging the scope of what an individual dancer can portray and silmultaneously creating a video dance piece.

Our intention is to plan a tour for fiscal 75-76 which will reach as large and varied an audience as possible. Therefore, we will construct the set pieces and video sculpture in such a way as to make them portable. Tour possibilities being discussed now include some street performances, productions in art galleries, universities and with other artists' groups. Funding would be matched by the receiving institution and, in the case of street performances, by the cities in which it would play.

The original concepts we explored, for example the "video conference" idea to be done over cable television, are still in the planning stages. We are seeking a way to pursue that idea with a more limited budget than the one originally proposed. If successful, we will submit a joint proposal with the TP under the directorship of Shirley Clarke in the fall.

Scanned from the Wendy Clarke collection at the Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research, with support from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

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